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Business Etiquette Film Worksheet

1. Based on your research, how would you greet a new customer in your country in word and gesture?

You would greet a new customer with “As-salaamu alaykum” which means “hello” in Arabic. Then, you shake hands with the customer, and sometimes this could last quite some time. Only one person should put their hand out to shake, signaling you to then put yours out. You should always use the right hand, and it isn’t uncommon to be led somewhere while holding hands. Arabs don’t use the last name when addressing someone, but they are informal by using the first name instead. The name “Adam Smith” would be addressed as “Mr. Adam” not “Mr. Smith.”

2. Is there any difference between how you greet a man and how you greet a woman?

There aren’t any huge differences, but if you’re a male, then you should wait for the woman to shake your hand first, but if she doesn’t extend hers out then don’t try to shake hands. Also, if you’re a male meeting with a woman then avoid touching and long eye contact. The only time there is a difference in greeting is when there aren’t people of the same gender meeting.

3. What are the tips for how to successfully conduct a conversation in your culture (body language, good manners, proximity to others, proper way to dress, etc.?

In Dubai, you should create a business relationship on mutual friendship and trust. You should talk about your personal life often to create this closer friendship. Arabs don’t usually make a written agreement, they just like to trust you and take your word on a deal. You need to be patient while in a meeting because phone calls are taken and people can show up unannounced. The communication is slow, they are often hectic, and they don’t follow a specific agenda. The issues that need to be discussed are just brought up during the scheduled conference. Lastly, being on time to a meeting in Dubai isn’t really expected, although it is expected of the foreigners to do so. As long as you have a polite excuse, then being late will slide.

4. Is there anything specifically that you must avoid to keep from offending your hosts (topics/gestures to avoid, time to arrive, different expectations?)

Foreigners should not wear traditional clothing because it could be found offensive. Always shake hands with the right hand, don’t cross your legs while sitting because showing the bottom of your foot is offensive, and you shouldn’t ever refuse a gift because it is viewed as impolite. Also, you shouldn’t talk about the subject of woman or ask about a man’s wife or daughter because it is very impolite. You should dress modestly and be covered up and not showy. You shouldn’t schedule meetings during prayer time or big holidays, and you shouldn’t expect to have a one-on-one meeting with someone. Lastly, the “thumbs up” sign is offensive.

5. How would you take leave of (say goodbye to) your customer in word and gesture?

You would just say “Ma salamaa” which means “goodbye” in Arabic to leave your customer, there is no gesture, but you do need to be on the same page and have everything completed.